

How Do I Invite a Friend to Church?

Our Lenten parish mission is right around the corner (March 4, 5, and 6). This year's three evening sessions will include dynamic talks, powerful worship, and opportunities for Confession. This event has been carefully crafted to be a chance for people to meet Jesus personally, particularly in the experience of Eucharistic adoration.

We want for this to be a chance for you to be renewed in your encounter with Jesus, but also for people who have not yet had that significant moment of encounter to have the opportunity to meet the Lord! But, how to get them to come?

So many people are uncomfortable coming to things at church when they have been away for awhile for one reason and one reason only: they simply haven't been invited! We learned at our Alpha training that 90% of people who attend Alpha do so because they have been invited personally by someone else. But how can we be confident that we are inviting in a way that will be well received?

How to Do Invitational Evangelization

When two of Jesus' would-be disciples ask Him where He is staying at the beginning of the Gospel of John, He says to them, "Come and See." So much of evangelization is about that: invitation to encounter Christ. But how do we go about inviting that friend, family member, or acquaintance from around the parish who is not yet all *that* involved in the life of our St. John Neumann family to "Come and See" during this dynamic opportunity this Lent?

The key is to know where people are at. People go to things because they think there will be something valuable for them there. So you have to know how to speak to someone's heart where they are at right now. We have to cater our invitation to where they might be at spiritually.

Sherry Weddell outlines 5 stages, or thresholds, that everyone walks through as they become a disciple of Jesus Christ. I am going to provide a brief description of each of the 5 stages below, along with some phrases or ideas you can use when inviting someone you believe to be in that stage.

(1) Trust – The person who has a basic, positive association with Jesus, the Church, or a Catholic

If someone is in "Trust," you might overwhelm them by trying to encourage them to come with words like "Eucharistic Adoration!" However, maybe this person will just want to come because they like you and you will be there. Assure them that you'll be there and maybe even let them know you'd be willing to give them a ride! That way they don't show up alone. You are the bridge for them.

(2) Curiosity – The person who is intrigued by Jesus, His life, or the Church

Ask questions to pique deeper curiosity! “Have you ever thought about whether the Catholic faith might actually be true?” “What do you think is the meaning of our lives?” “Who do you think Jesus was?” After listening to their answer, propose to them our mission as a way of finding out what Catholics think is the meaning of our existence as persons. So, (1) Arouse deeper curiosity, (2) Propose attending the mission as a way to find answers!

(3) Openness – The person who is open to the possibility of spiritual or personal change

This is where the disciples are at when they encounter Jesus. This is why He tells them to Come and See. They have to take some steps forward in order to begin moving. Maybe you can let someone who is in “Openness” know that this event will be something a little different than their normal experience of Sunday Mass, that they will have an opportunity to see another aspect of the Church and be brought a little deeper into a relationship with Christ. Something that piques their interest and makes them want to commit the time to making a step forward and come.

(4) Seeking – The person who is “dating with a purpose but not yet married”

This person is actively looking for answers and moving in the direction of giving their life to Christ and becoming a disciple. Tell them that this is a great way to grow in community, get involved in the parish, and continue growing in their spiritual walk.

(5) Intentional Disciple – The person who is a committed follower of Christ in His Church

Just tell them that Jesus will be there (and that there’s childcare) and they’ll come! Or, if they are a disciple who is not Catholic (i.e., a Protestant), tell them that this is a great way to see the heart of Catholicism, the reason why you are so committed to your Catholic faith.

Conclusion

These strategies can work for inviting friends and relatives to any of our events at St. John Neumann: our parish missions, Alpha, our adult faith formation opportunities, etc. At the end of the day, the words you use are less important than that you actually speak them! Too often, out of fear of awkwardness, we don’t invite someone to something that could be truly life-changing for them. Let’s not withhold from others the amazing gift of a relationship with Christ!

Even disciples won’t come if they don’t know when/where the mission is! So, either way, let’s do some inviting!

Here is my **challenge** to you:

- Make a list of five people. They can be parishioners or not, Catholic or not, who are maybe not THAT into their faith yet.
- Invite them to come to our **Lenten Parish Mission**, March 4-6, from 6:30-8pm in the Chapel.